

# Sounding the Trumpet

April - June 2013



# Why the Gospel?

Text: Nehemiah 8:1-9.

The Gospel of Christ is attacked on all sides today, but how sad that it is being distorted by those who ought to be preaching and upholding it! The foundation of Christian belief and practice is nothing more or less than the Holy Bible. Anything beyond that is heresy.

When the people of Judah returned to Jerusalem they found their beloved city in ruins and immediately set themselves to rebuilding the walls. The most important job was not in fact the rebuilding of defensive walls, but the rebuilding of their spiritual foundation. This is why they gathered together to hear Ezra the scribe preach the word of God. His preaching convicted and blessed them, so they began to worship and praise the Lord. "And all the people answered, Amen, Amen, with lifting up their hands: and they bowed their heads, and worshipped the LORD with their faces to the ground" (Nehemiah 8:6). The preaching of truth caused the people to glorify God. In this study we will look at a few reasons why the Word of God is as vital in this generation as it was in Nehemiah's day.

The Gospel of Christ is not just good news, it is the absolute truth that saves a soul from sin and damnation. The very first mention of the Gospel in the New Testament reads, "And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people" (Matthew 4:23). We see then that God is glorified when people are set free from all kinds of bondages through the preaching of His word.

Everything we do must be done for the glory of God. This means that we ought to honour, praise, exalt and magnify Him in all things, which obviously includes preaching and teaching His word. When a preacher is full of self-esteem and self-worth he seeks to be in the limelight and at the centre of people's focus. His preaching will be all about who he is, what his vision is and his accomplishments. Basically Christ is just a side issue and of less importance than the preacher's inflated opinion of himself. The true man of God does not preach about himself but instead points his listeners to the only one who can save their souls. All the glory, no matter how insignificant it might be to us, must go to the Lord. "That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 15:6).

God the Father cannot be glorified more than when the Gospel of Christ is faithfully preached with the power of His Spirit. Those who hear us teach and preach should not gather to be entertained with gimmicks, rather they must come to see Jesus. "Sir, we would see Jesus" (John 12:21). It is the preacher's responsibility to point the people to Christ. The Lord is clearly seen when the minister steps out of the way and fades from view. "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30). The preaching of God's word has nothing to do with grammar, eloquence or education, instead true preaching starts with the anointing of the Holy Spirit on the preacher's life. Until we can say with the apostle Paul, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me" (Galatians 2:20), we are not in the right spiritual condition to minister God's word.

If our intention is to reveal Jesus then the Lord will both bless and prosper our ministry. This is what the apostles, revivalists and missionaries set out to do, so no wonder they saw the results that we only long to see. "Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel" (Ephesians 3:5-6). The more we tell others more about Christ and less about ourselves, the more chance they have in coming to saving faith in Him. "But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord" (2 Corinthians 4:3-5).

If we preach ourselves then our listeners will eventually find fault and become disenchanted, but if we reveal Christ to them they will understand for themselves and go on to bring others to salvation. By nature man is unable to come to an understanding of the truth without the power of the Holy Spirit. "This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness" (Ephesians 4:17-19). As soon as a preacher reveals Jesus the light of the Gospel illuminates the sinner's mind and the word spoken makes sense. "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Corinthians 4:6). This is the direct working of the Holy Spirit on that person's soul. "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth" (John 16:13).

The purpose of the Gospel is not just to inform others about our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, for it must include instruction for godly living. The word of God demands a response from those who hear it, but not merely mental assent, instead there must be the corresponding action on our part. The angel who spoke to Cornelius told him to send for Peter for "he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do" (Acts 10:6). Maybe we do not like being told what to do, but there it is, that is part of what Gospel preaching is all about. Sound preaching always motivates us to turn away from everything that displeases God. "Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity" (2 Timothy 2:19). The word of God never sanctions laziness in our lives, and it is certain that God never purposed for His people to sit down and do nothing. It does not matter how young or old we are, we can God has a work for us to do. The twelve-year-old Jesus said, "I must be about my Father's business" (Luke 2:49). Then Gospel gets us going. "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world" (Matthew 28:19-20).

Why the Gospel? Because it is the method God uses to bring souls to salvation. "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power

of God unto salvation to every one that believeth" (Romans 1:16). The Gospel in and of itself cannot actually save anyone, but it points the sinner to the only one who can redeem him or her. That said, it does save believers who act upon it from the countless snares the evil one has set to destroy their faith. Simply put; if the Gospel is not preached, then souls will not be saved and the saints will not "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18). "How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?" (Romans 10:14).

**Gary J. Hall**

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## How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?

"By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion" (Psalm 137).

God fulfilled His promise to return His people to Israel, for they had been exiled in Babylon for 70 years. I suppose many would class Ezra as one of the 'minor prophets', but he had an extraordinary ministry and valuable contribution to working out God's purposes for His people. This priestly scribe, and religious leader was in ministry approximately 450BC .

Ezra 7:6 - He was a teacher well versed in the law of Moses. Ezra was responsible for bringing thousands of Jewish exiles back from Babylon to their spiritual and earthly home - Jerusalem. He was thought to be a direct descendant of Aaron. During the reign of King Artaxerxes of Persia, Ezra was granted leave to go to Jerusalem with it is thought 5,000 Israelites.

Ezra 7:21 - "Now I King Artaxerxes, order all the treasures of Trans-Euphrates to provide with diligence whatever Ezra the priest, a teacher of the law of the God of heaven, may ask of you." They arranged and organized their four month trek across the desert to Jerusalem.

Ezra 7:9 - "He had begun his journey from Babylon on the first day of the first month, and arrived in Jerusalem on the first day of the fifth month." What an great undertaking this would have been, with great responsibility and trusting God all the way! Imagine if you were to trek for four months with just six people, how much planning you would need? But the Lord was with them and Ezra was obedient. We read in the scriptures how Ezra prayed and fasted before this great journey, also how the Lord our God was with them and protected them from enemies and bandits along the way. This was a great accomplishment. On arrival in Jerusalem Ezra proceeded to rearrange the services taking part in the temple. He saw the need for this as a return back to scriptural truth and reverent worship. He wanted to bring about a total about turn of the Israelite people back to Mosaic Law, to the Commandments and Covenants of God. He had found that many of them had taken heathen wives and thought that the whole Jewish faith was under threat at that time.

Ezra 9:1 - "The people of Israel, including the priests and the Levites, have not kept themselves separate from the neighbouring peoples with their detestable practices." Ezra demanded the end of mixed marriages, and the total separation of people who wouldn't obey this command. This must have

been a very difficult undertaking with some opposition, but Ezra knew he must remain solely for God and not compromise. In chapter ten we read that they were told to make confession to the Lord and to separate themselves from their foreign wives and peoples. What was the response to these demands? The Israelites were repentant and in agreement. I think it was because of the power of the message being preached by Ezra. .

Ezra 10:12 - The whole assemblies response to Ezra, 'You are right! We must do as you say.' Ezra had a heart for his people and preached on the importance of the Books of Moses. He wanted revival so was fervent and forthright in upholding God's laws.

Ezra 7:10 - "For Ezra had devoted himself to the study and observance of the law of the Lord." He reintroduced the Feast of Tabernacles. Scholars believe that he was the founder of the Knesset (the great assembly). He is also credited for introducing synagogues into the Jewish community. This was a great accomplishment at a very important and vital period in Jewish history. To turn them back into a worshipping people.

I believe that it was Ezra's fervent study of scripture and love for God that made him such an accomplished prophet, someone who actually got things done. He didn't compromise or shy away from tough teaching or difficult messages. He wanted to please God not man, so helped bring a nation back to God. We could do with some 'Ezra' characters around our nation now, since we too find ourselves in a 'strange land'!

**Richard Hardy**

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## Heaven on Earth for the Christian Believer

Can this statement be possibly true or is it simply misguided and mischievous thinking?

### Beautiful Basis of all Blessing

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ (Ephesians 1:3).

One single verse of Scripture can capture our attention, warm our hearts and lift our spirits. Indeed all scripture is quick and powerful and sharper than any two edged sword. It is divinely designed to deal with our present situation and our future standing. It is certain that our scripture refers not only to the future state of the believer it refers to the here and now, and the realm of invisible reality which we cannot see or touch at this moment.

### Heavenly Help on the Cosmic Horizon

It might be helpful at this point to remember the scared to death servant of Elisha who had hit rock bottom and thought it all was over for him. He despaired in the dangerous times he was living in. With perfect timing the Lord opened his red-rimmed eyes to see the chariots of God, manned by

myriads of angels. Heavenly forces are always available in large numbers and at full strength (2 Kings 6:17).

#### Pressure of Modern Living and Modern Preaching Ministry

It is from the heavenly realm that all our blessings must come as we face the huge pressures of modern living as well as the pressures of modern ministry in 2013. In broad terms let me say science only deals with what it can see and qualify. Philosophy tries to explain and elucidate! The reason both fail to reach the A\* mark for the Christian is simple; it is that the heavenly places in Christ are a complete mystery to science and philosophy. However the heavenly places are not a mystery to God's Holy Spirit.

#### Heavenly Help is Close at Hand

He can bring spiritual blessing and power from the heavenly realms you and to me at this time as we face the problems of modern day living and issues of our Christian ministries. We have faith knowing that all the resources of the heavenly realm are available to each Christian believer here and now in the present earthly realm.

#### Colour in the Closing Clause

We know that as all colour is hidden in the sunlight, waiting to be drawn off and displayed in the flowers, so all the Christians blessings are stored up in our Lord Jesus Christ. If we draw from those sources constantly and consistently we shall be profitable, victorious and colourful Christians. If we persistently draw only from the earthly realm we will ultimately be disappointed and downcast in our lives and in our ministries.

#### Conclusion

As Christian believers we ought to look up to the Heavenly places in Christ Jesus, then move on to victory in life and ministry together.

**Frank Rowley**



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# Fellowship of Evangelistic Ministries

F.E.M.



## Annual General Meeting 2013

By kind invitation our  
Celebration Rally  
will be held at

Hunslet Nazarene Church  
Lupton Street, Hunslet, Leeds, LS10 2QR

**11 May 2013**

**AGM: 1:00 - 2.30 pm**

Refreshments provided

**Report and Celebration Meeting: 4:00 pm**

All members of the Fellowship of Evangelistic Ministries are invited to the AGM. Why not bring a friend so that they can be introduced to the work and ministry of FEM!

*All Welcome!*